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Canadian faces British spy charge

Reuters
LONDON - A Canadian professor denied yesterday that he passed NATO secrets to the Soviet Union and gathered information that might have harmed Britain.

The prosecution charged that Hugh Hambleton, 60, who teaches economics at Laval University in Quebec, had been for nearly 30 years in almost continuous contact with Soviet agents all over the world, but mainly in Quebec and Paris.

It was the second case involving national security before London's Old Bailey criminal court yesterday. Earlier, a British woman diplomat received a nine-month suspended prison sentence for breaching the Official Secrets Act.

Rhona Ritchie, 30-year-old first secretary at the British embassy in Tel Aviv, admitted passing details of confidential government telegrams to her Egyptian lover in November.

Hambleton, who has dual British and Canadian nationality, was arrested on a visit to London in June.

Atty. Gen. Sir Michael Havers said the professor passed a great deal of classified material to Moscow while working at NATO's economic and finance division in Paris between 1956 and 1961.



Rhona Ritchie leaves London's Old Bailey courthouse yesterday after being sentenced for passing British information to her Egyptian lover. UPI PHOTO

Hambleton told British police he dined with Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB, during a visit to Moscow in 1975, he added.

The professor thought Andropov wanted him to give a political and economic assessment, Havers said.

Defense sources said a lance corporal in Britain's army intelligence also could face charges under the Official Secrets Act. But the sources stressed no information had changed hands.

The three cases coincide with calls from the right wing of Britain's governing Conservative Party for a full judi-

cial inquiry into British security after the unmasking and jailing of Soviet spy Geoffrey Prime Nov. 10.

The prosecution said most of the evidence against Hambleton came from his interviews with British police after his arrest.

Havers said the professor first was approached by the KGB in Canada 30 years ago. The professor allegedly told police he passed Moscow details of NATO documents dealing with economic information, oil and politics and said Moscow continually wanted him to evaluate what NATO was likely to do.